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What's in Walker's Budget this Time?

MADISON- On February 8, 2017 Governor Scott Walker unveiled his proposed state budget in his biennial budget address. After six years, taxpayers have heard and seen this show before. Governor Walker is a good salesman, but after years of his governorship, too many hard-working Wisconsin families are still struggling to get ahead. When the rubber meets the road, Northern Wisconsin continues to get the short end of the stick from Madison.

Governor Walker's reelection budget demonstrates the failures of his leadership; he tries to solve an education crisis he created by restoring a fraction of what his previous budgets already cut from our community schools. I am glad that we have moved beyond the devastating cuts of Governor Walker's last three budgets, but the damage has already been done to public schools in the 74th Assembly District. Many communities like ours have been forced to pass referendums raising taxes on themselves just to keep the lights on. The modest increase in support proposed by Governor Walker is encouraging, but does not make up for years of cuts.

In more bad news for Wisconsin's students, Governor Walker has proposed eliminating the state's Farm to School Program. The program enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local farmers by providing nutritious, locally grown food for students and school programming such as training for food service personnel. The program had strong support from both the State Assembly and the Senate, was signed into law in 2010, and has been a success ever since. I feel so strongly about this issue that the first bill I introduced as a legislator was to provide funding for Farm to School grants. Eliminating the Farm to School program as the Governor proposes would be a shame. I am hopeful that my colleagues in the Legislature will undo this harmful cut as we move through the budget process.

Education is crucial for Wisconsin's future, and so is quality transportation infrastructure. Years of Republican inaction on road funding have resulted in costly project delays, job layoffs and a \$1 billion transportation budget deficit. I am very concerned about the level of bonding in Governor Walker's proposal. Bonding is not a feasible solution to Wisconsin's transportation infrastructure needs, and it will be difficult for Governor Walker to get the Legislature's approval to kick the can down the road and run up the state's credit card. Poor planning, a failing transportation financing structure, and crumbling roads and bridges all point to a lack of leadership from Governor Walker on transportation funding.

Although I believe Wisconsin can do much better, there are also encouraging signs in this budget proposal. Increased state aid to counties and municipalities, as well as new funding for rural broadband expansion and increases in nursing home provider rates, are all positive ideas. As the budget process continues, I will work diligently to improve on Governor Walker's proposal and craft a budget that works for all Wisconsinites. It is my hope that my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will do the same.

Please stay tuned for future updates. I plan to hold budget listening sessions throughout Northern Wisconsin with the intent of providing some clarity and information about how the budget will impact our communities.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns about issues relating to state government. I can be reached at 888-534-0074 or Rep.Meyers@legis.wisconsin.gov.

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